Into another winter of discontent?

WORKERS DEMAND Better!

Union bosses visit Derry

1922-2022 International Workers Association centenary

BLACK STAR

Chinese workers escape workers' paradise!

'We…have achieved a new breakthrough in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context', speech of Xi Xinping at 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, 16 Oct.

There's a famous Glasgow leftist myth about a former British soldier from the city stationed in Cold War Berlin who decided to climb the wall and thereby 'escape' into the Communist East and waiting 'workers' paradise'. Recent images from the city of Zhengzhou showing workers at the Foxconn iPhone factory scaling the perimeter fences and heading home marked the beginning of a wider workers' revolt across China against the regime.

Continued on page 2

Chinese workers escape workers' paradise!

Although presented by the western media as a story about authoritarian lockdown rules and population control, the actual origin of China's current upheaval relates to the abuse and exploitation of workers.

The current phase of the crisis arose out of the intolerable working conditions faced by those employed by the Taiwanese tech firm contracted to provide Apple with iPhones at roughly half the cost of producing the phones in the United States. With almost 1.3 million employees, Foxconn is one of the world's largest companies and its Chinese operations in Shenzhen were rocked over a decade ago by an outbreak of worker suicides. This time however, workers are fighting back and voting with their feet. Hundreds left the factory after days of protests against unpaid bonuses and being compelled to work after a large Covid outbreak in the factory.

Police were called in by the socialist state to drive the workers back and after days of rioting, the government and employers decided to change tact and offer more money - on condition that the protesting workers leave! Many had already done so and many others needed the money for the long journey back to their homes. Soon after, another factory in Henan province which made industrial clothing caught fire and almost 40 workers, mainly women, were killed. Lax health and safety regulations, greed, corruption and the insatiable pursuit of profit that marks so much of contemporary Chinese capitalism was responsible.

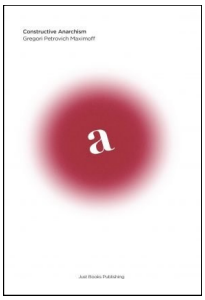
Regularly declaiming attempts to undermine or criticize its system of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', the Chinese state (whose socialist content continues to be taken literally by the West for its own reasons), has had to deal with growing numbers of workers protesting against the strictures of their own workers' state. Even where this particular upsurge of popular militancy might subside, there is clearly something stirring in China that no state, no matter how powerful, can overcome.

Union bosses visit Derry

For some reason known only to themselves, Derry Trades Council recently hosted an evening of talking bollix with invited trade union bosses to address the current wave of industrial unrest. Owen Reidy, new ICTU General Secretary was joined by Paddy Mackel from NIC-ICTU and UNISON veteran, Patricia McKeown, along with some wanker from the INTO (the Catholic teaching union), and a couple of other apparatchiks. The meeting was ostensibly to promote the Derry launch of ICTU's 'Workers Demand Better' campaign calling on, you guessed it, Stormont (which isn't sitting) to basically sort everything out for us. It was followed up by a march and rally with yet more speeches on Saturday, 26 Nov. Reidy in particular has been touting for NIC-ICTU to get a seat at the table when Stormont eventually re-materialises as a first step to following the well-worn path of so-called social partnership.

Just Books Publishing

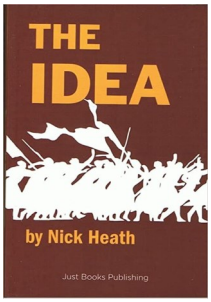
Just Books Publishing, recently set up by the Just Books Collective (an integral part of the work of Organise!), has successfully released its first two titles.



The first is a reprint of Gregori Maximoff's *Constructive Anarchism*, to mark the 100th year of existence of the International Workers Association (IWA) the Anarcho-Syndicalist international founded in Berlin in 1922.

isbn 9781739723705

£11.99



The second title is Nick Heath's *The Idea. Anarchist Communism: Past, Present and Future* - a welcome and new comprehensive work on anarchist communism, this book seeks to rehabilitate the current of anarchist-communism. To make it better known and understood.

...a good substantial book, and much needed. Lucidly written, it provides a rich brew of engaging discussions of the 'Idea' (anarchist communism as a political philosophy), interesting vignettes of many individual anarchists, and a great historical account of the many anarchist communist organisations over the past 150 years… (Brian Morris on *The Idea)*

isbn 9781739723712

£18.99

https://organiseanarchistsireland.com/shop/

IWA-AIT Centenary Congress (1922-2022)

28th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
AIT IWA 100 YEARS 1922 2022
WWW.IWA-AIT.ORG
28 CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL
AIT IWA 100 AÑOS 1922 2022
MUR MAP MSP IAA IWA AIT
ALCOY
5 / 11 · 12 · 2022

Between 5 and 11 December, anarcho-syndicalist delegates and friends will gather in Alcoi, north of Alicante to celebrate one hundred years of our international, the International Workers' Association. Among film screenings, exhibitions and round table discussions, delegates will set out their vision for anarchism in the next hundred years. The Congress will also see Organise! put forward for official friendship status and we have the support of comrades in Britain's Solidarity Federation (SolFed), and sections of Spain's CNT.

The location of Alcoi recognises the town's historic linkages to the anarchist movement and the events of the famous uprising of workers, members of the First International in July 1873 against the attempts of the bourgeois liberal republicans to crush the movement in its infancy. A general strike and takeover of the town hall by the workers signalled the start of what is remembered as La Revolució del Petroli or the 'Petroleum Revolution' during which anarchist workers declared the town independent and began the work of re-organising when it was overthrown by the authorities who claimed to support the workers' demands, with hundreds arrested and imprisoned.

Into a Winter of Discontent?

Profits are soaring as the cost of living rises. Workers are facing pay cuts and more are taking strike action in what some are likening to the UK Winter of Discontent of 1978-79. Nurses are striking on 15th and 20th of December, joining the CWU, RMT and UCU members taking strike action across the UK. Royal Mail workers have held a number of strikes across the UK with further action scheduled for 9, 11, 14, 15, 23 and 24 December. UNITE members at Queens University Belfast took strike action on 30th November, coinciding with UCU strike action and seeing a mass picket line in front of the university. Teachers are taking action short of a strike. Locally health workers who are members of NIPSA and UNISON are currently engaged in action short of a strike and will take one day strike action on Monday 12 December. GMB members have voted for strike action and UNITE is currently balloting around 4000 members across health care.

Encouraging as this wave of strike action is comparisons to the Winter of Discontent remain overstated. The anger, energy and rank and file control of 1978-79 is so far lacking. Sparked by wildcat strike action at Ford by workers rejecting a sub-inflation pay offer after years of TUC bureaucrat endorsed pay restraint the Trade Union leaders had to run to catch up with angry workers. The Ford workers broke the government 5% pay increase cap by seizing the initiative and forcing a 17% pay rise on the company. Striking Esso and BP lorry drivers closed thousands of petrol stations. Public sector workers staged a 'Day of Action' 22 January 1979. Over 1.5 million workers took strike action in the biggest work stoppage since the British general strike of 1926. Mass demonstrations took place in cities including London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. Rail workers, nurses, ambulance crews, grave diggers and refuse collectors went on strike.

Taking the struggle out of the hands of bureaucrats who can and will sell us short is one lesson to be drawn. Breaking down Trades Union sectionalism and joining our struggles together is another. Comparisons lead to another conclusion - its time we got rid of the rotten system that is based on our exploitation and which steals the wealth we create once and for all. No?

Meanwhile... in Ballymena

The controversy is over, and I say 'thank fuck', it's already gone on too long. That's right, big Jeffrey is staying with the Skyblues after the recent win over Carrick!

Actually, say what you like about Ballymena United, at least nobody died building the Showgrounds!

Not that workers' deaths are the focus over in Qatar, apparently it's all about LGBTQ+ rights! Who knew football players were so concerned and exercised about it, especially given how easy it is for professionals to come out!

Get Involved: Help Build An Anarchist Alternative.

Organise! is an anarchist political group in Ireland who take inspiration from the self directed struggles of working-class people, particularly those organised on anarcho-syndicalist lines. Our history goes back to the original formation of Organise! by the Ballymena and Antrim Anarchist Groups in 1985.

We are a small, but growing, group of ordinary working class people who are fed up with being fucked about by the profit system, fed up with seeing our communities and workplaces torn apart by racism, patriarchy, nationalism and sectarianism, and sick of a greedy few getting rich off everyone else's backs.

We are actively working to promote solidarity in opposition to capitalism, the state, patriarchy and all other forms of oppression and hierarchy. The way we organise reflects the free society we want to create: one based on voluntary association, democratic participation and self-management.

Our members are workers, claimants, students, migrants, unemployed and other working-class people committed to building a libertarian communist union movement actively opposed to all forms of oppression and exploitation.

We want to improve everyday conditions for ourselves and other working class people, but we also struggle for the revolutionary transformation that can create a free and equal society, one based on mutual aid and co-operation. Sound crazy? Maybe it does, but in an era in which it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism the continuation of the present system is even crazier…

The current system isn't working – ill-health, stress and overwork affect more and more people while others are flung on the dole; for increasing amounts of workers it is precarity, zero hours contracts and the stress of being unable to plan or budget our lives; we live in a world of plentiful resources yet millions starve; some people make vast fortunes just because they own companies, land, property or natural resources, but those of us who create the wealth, work the land and build the properties are left struggling to survive; politicians tell us there's no money – not for wages, benefits or local amenities, but there's always plenty for war; both locally and globally the gap between the richest and the poorest sections of society has never been so great; instead of a war on poverty they've got a war on 'benefit fraud', while the same system that creates war, poverty and environmental destruction stigmatises, imprisons and deports the resultant refugees.

We don't think these things are inevitable or coincidental, we think they are related to capitalism – an economic system defined by wage slavery and the accumulation of profit out of other people's work. So we support all workers against their bosses in demanding higher wages and better conditions. We try to intervene practically to support workers engaged in disputes and are also active in our own workplaces and communities. Not only against exploitation but against the multiple oppressions faced by members of the working class in all our diversity.

But it's not just a question of trying to struggle by in a world of exploitation and oppression; we look to a future where workers control production and society in their own interests. And unlike some people who claim to oppose capitalism, we don't want to be a new set of leaders and we refuse to be led by anyone else. We advocate direct democracy in the workplace and through the commune in our communities – working in federation to ensure that the needs of all are met and that no-one is ever again in a position to oppress or exploit another human being.

If you are interested in these ideas, we'd encourage you to explore our website and consider getting involved.

We currently have members in Belfast, Cork, Derry, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and Portadown and are building the organisation on the basis of active involvement and participation. We aren't interested in meaningless 'paper' membership so you can't join by filling in an online form and bunging us a few quid.

To talk to us about joining get the ball rolling, check out our website at https://organiseanarchistsireland.com and send an email to:

organiseasi@gmail.com